



## Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact [support@jstor.org](mailto:support@jstor.org).

## A TREASURE QUEST

Some men stalk big game, some seek for gold, while some pursue treasures of an historical character. The writer of the following article is an enthusiast of the last-named kind, a loyal member of the State Historical Society, who describes the difficulties and thrills attending one particular conquest.—EDITOR.

He was eighty-five years old and had in his possession a precious newspaper file which he had preserved, through many vicissitudes, for sixty years. This I had learned through correspondence with him. At once a mighty resolution seized me. I must get that file and deposit it in the vaults of the State Historical Society, where it would be practically safe forever, and where its rich resources of local history would be available to the future student and research worker who might be interested in it. It was, I reasoned, probably the only file, at least of anything like its size in existence, as the paper when printed had a circulation of only a few hundred, if indeed more than a few dozen, at first, and most of the copies must long since have disappeared. I had accidentally come upon a copy of an early issue of the paper while preparing an article on the beginnings of the nationality press in this country. A good friend, who also answered to the description of being "a great hand at saving everything," had found it among the many interesting literary effects of his father and had sent it to me. I saw at once that it was much more than a mere newspaper of the time. It was a great repository of local history pertaining to the immigrants from the district of Voss, in that it contained many names of newcomers and their destinations, together with notices of marriages, births, and deaths among them, as well as like

data from the same district in Norway. It was also, as it were, a bridge between the old home district and its representatives in pioneer America, in that it contained short personal letters written on both sides of the sea to relatives who might not otherwise be reached by them. I realized what a store of interesting information would be found could more copies of the paper be discovered. The sense of its rarity was the more impressed upon me when I found that no mention was made of its existence by other historians. Evidently they had not known of it.

As yet, of course, I knew nothing of the existence of this file, but some time afterward I wrote to an interesting old man who as a young immigrant had been connected with the then intellectual life of the nationality, to get such recollections as he might have of the newspapers of the time. Incidentally I mentioned that I had a copy of the little Vossing paper and inquired if he knew anything of its history. Imagine my surprise and delight to receive a letter from him stating that he had a practically complete file of it covering the three years or more of its existence. It was somewhere among the effects in his old trunks in the attic and some day, perhaps, I might see it.

When, later, the old gentleman came to a local sanitarium for treatment, I lost no time in calling on him and learning more about the precious file in his possession. Again he repeated his promise that he would let me see it sometime if he ever had an opportunity to unearth it. He informed me that he had a mass of other material, old books, letters, clippings, and scrap books in the same attic, a further interesting revelation. Doubtless in this accumulation were many other treasures of value, but for the present my heart was set upon that file.

The more I reflected upon the subject, the more urgent it seemed to me that some one should act and that it was up to me to do so. At his age, I reasoned, he might drop

off at any time, and with him might go his treasured trifles, so ridiculous from one point of view, so rich and valuable from another. His sons and daughters at home were active, energetic people of affairs, conducting a large farm and other activities, living distinctly in the present. They might take little time disposing of such effects, once he were gone; at any rate, it seemed the part of wisdom to deal with the aged owner of them himself, since his interest in them could not be doubted.

At last one beautiful summer afternoon I knocked at the door of his fine farm home, and happily enough was received by the patriarch himself. A delightful afternoon was spent with him. Tale after tale of early days in Chicago was told; how, when the future metropolis had but two lines of railway—one entering from the south and one from the northwest—the people went daily to meet the incoming evening train; how he had packed water from a pump on the prairie; of his musical studies and his ventures as a publisher of music; of the Great Fire, etc. He also showed me over his place and through his gardens, and treated me to grapes fresh from the vine. Three times, he said, he had been the victim of disastrous fires, first in the Chicago conflagration of '71, when all his plates and stock of music had been wiped out; next when his house, which stood on the site of the present one, had been destroyed; and lastly when all his grain-stacks and barns had once been burned up by a spark from a threshing engine. That the object of my quest should have escaped all these dangers seemed somewhat remarkable to me.

Having thus thoroughly ingratiated myself into his confidence, I finally broached the object of my visit, which was to see and, if possible, borrow his old newspaper file. Again he told me it was buried somewhere in the recesses of the attic, but that some day he would resurrect it and let me see it. I offered to help in the search for it, but was asked to wait until some more convenient time.

This, of course, did not get me anywhere; but, being a newspaperman and trained to get the essential thing wanted, I did not wholly give up. There was an afternoon train for home, but my host informed me that there was also a later night train, and if I would stay for supper he would himself drive me in his top buggy to the station. Here might be another chance. I accepted, and we continued our visit.

As we sat in the shade of the porch, looking out upon the lovely landscape where we could almost hear the heart of summer beating in the sunbathed fields and meadows, a bank of black clouds came suddenly rolling up from the west. In a few moments there was a dash of rain. Then one of the daughters came to the door and asked him if the skylight in the roof was closed. He believed not, and said he would go up and close it. "Would you like to see the view from our roof?" he asked me. "It is most charming." I should be delighted. So we climbed the stairs to the second floor, then up another into the attic, where at last, it was given me to see the numerous boxes and trunks which I knew contained the family relics and mementos and the particular object desired by me. From the attic floor a ladder ran up perpendicularly to a hole in the roof. Up this ladder we went in the rain and then stepped out upon the roof where we beheld a beautiful panorama spread out before us. I trembled with apprehension to see the old man climb this ladder, and more so when he stepped out upon the slippery roof and closed the window. It seemed to me that a misstep or a slip would send him sliding from the roof to a sudden death, and my quest and my pleasant visit have a most tragic result. But he was more sure-footed than I had imagined him, and we descended safely to the attic floor.

Now, I felt, was opportunity making her traditional and irrevocable knock at the door. I resolved not to quit

that attic empty-handed without a struggle and without exhausting every resource to attain my end. I engaged the old gentleman in conversation, and the consuming interest I showed in everything about me rekindled his own enthusiasm, and almost before he was aware of it I had thrown open one trunk after another and hauled out pictures, books, old watches, knives, rings, albums, faded manuscripts and letters, whose history one after another he told me. Finally, from the bottom of one of the boxes, he brought up himself the old newspaper file. At last I had it in my hands, and I never surrendered it until he indulgently agreed to let me take it along for safe-keeping in the great library of the state. Ordinarily I would have fled the house at once and the steaming supper awaiting us, but my story was not spoiled when I took the chance by remaining. My confidence was not misplaced and the file remained with me.